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ABSTRACT

This guide is designed to help the supervisor conduct effective counseling interviews with his employees. It consists of the following sections: (1) a general description of the counseling interview; (2) a discussion of the individual and the job; (3) suggestions on conducting the interview (considering what to do before, during and after the session); (4) tips on creative counseling, with clues to different kinds of individual behavior; and (5) a list of suggested readings. It presupposes no prior knowledge of counseling techniques, so it could be useful to employers in a wide variety of occupations. (Author/BP)

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What is covered in this

GUIDE to COUNSELING

and where to find it . . .

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THE COUNSELING INTERVIEW

What is the counseling interview?

The Counseling Interview or Performance Review is a meeting of you, the supervisor and your employee in which you discuss together—

—the individual's job

—the individual's job performance

—plans for performance improvement and personal development.

The individual is given an opportunity in this interview to express personal opinions and feelings with respect to job and job performance; and to set plans and targets to improve job performance.

You, *the manager,* have many objectives to achieve in this counseling session. Your goals are to—

- attempt to gain a better understanding of the individual and of your own functioning as a manager;
- help the individual to become more aware of the job *accountabilities* and of the relative importance of various job functions;
- help the individual to gain a better understanding of personal job *performance;*
- provide the direction and guidance necessary to bring about effective *planning* in line with the individual's needs and with company objectives; and
- help motivate the individual to carry out performance improvement and development plans.

The primary purpose of the interview is to assist the individual in becoming a more competent employee.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS *to be derived from a well-conducted counseling interview?*

1. *It benefits the individual counseled:* It gives the employee greater insight into job performance and helps make plans for performance improvement and personal development.

   As performance improves, the individual will find greater satisfaction in work, and will achieve other rewards associated with increased job effectiveness, greater responsibilities, and greater opportunities.

2. *It benefits the supervisor:* The supervisor gains an understanding of subordinates and of self along with insight into his or her role in their growth and development. The supervisor attains greater assurance in counseling, and the supervisor experiences added satisfaction from being able to exert greater influence on the performance of subordinates.

   The knowledge of becoming more effective as a "developer of people" makes for increased self-esteem and job satisfaction. The improved performance of subordinates reflects favorably on the supervisor, and combines with the personal growth of the manager to provide him or her with the personal and material rewards of job success.

3. *It benefits the company:* The company gains by the improved performance of both managers and other employees. This improvement results in a fuller utilization of people-power potential and increased operating efficiency in the company.

WHAT ARE SOME GENERAL BLOCKS *to effective counseling?*

Sometimes counseling is neglected—

The value of the counseling interview in influencing performance is sometimes overlooked completely, and frequently not fully appreciated. The interview may be conducted in a perfunctory manner, or postponed for too long periods of time, because the supervisor "does not have time", because it is considered to be unimportant, because counseling is viewed as a somewhat painful or embarrassing process.

Or its purpose is not fully appreciated—

In other instances the Counseling Interview may be conducted at appropriate intervals and allotted adequate time, but may not prove to be of particular value because the supervisor did not fully appreciate its purpose and did not use effective counseling techniques. Hence neither supervisor nor subordinate came through the experience with a better understanding of the problems involved and how best to deal with them.

The aim of this guidebook then is to assist you, the manager, in developing your employees through conducting more effective performance reviews and counseling sessions.

By increasing your knowledge and understanding of the counseling process your resulting increased confidence and skill should lead to better employee performance and to improved managerial effectiveness.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE JOB

and what **YOU** *can do to help*

There are many factors that determine how a person performs on the job. These include work situations, relationships with other people, the individual's own ability, home situation;—and many others.

It is important for you to recognize the range of possible influences on the individual's job performance. Some of these factors may be outside the scope of employment counseling, while others may be conditions over which you may exercise some control. And it is equally important that you be aware of the part that you, the supervisor, can play in making some of these influences a positive force for performance improvement and personal development in the individual.

As an aid in understanding the individual's job behavior, let's classify the major influences roughly into these three general categories:

FACTORS DETERMINING JOB PERFORMANCE

Then let's consider these categories separately, to see what each includes and what influences you, as his supervisor, might bring to bear in each case.

ABILITIES AND SKILLS

These represent the particular talents and skills the individual brings to the job—native ability, knowledge, planning skills, ability to work with others, education, experience, and similar factors.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Though you cannot hope to change the individual's endowments, you can do much toward insuring that the individual utilizes existing abilities fully. You can do this by providing additional training, direction, experience, and the opportunity to perform, as well as by providing the employee with a work climate that is conducive to best output.

This is a big order.

It means that you must recognize whether or not the individual is utilizing capabilities fully. It means that you must guard against underestimating potential and insure that the employee is adequately challenged on the job.

It is easy and natural to assume that the individual's past behavior is the "true" index of ability. However, only by questioning and trying to analyze the factors which have influenced past performance can you determine whether this is so.

Feelings of apprehension and defensiveness tend to discourage creativity and original thinking and action. If your behavior has instilled such feelings in your employees, you are preventing them from utilizing their abilities fully. Also, your subordinates may not have demonstrated certain abilities because you have not given them an opportunity to do so.

People often behave the way we expect them to behave; and for this reason mediocre performance by your subordinates may be partially a result of your own expectations.

> Have you set high standards of performance, and have you made every effort to help the individual attain these standards? . . . Have you sincerely tried to help the individual to learn on the job, to grow and develop? . . . Have you created a work climate which encourages the expression of ideas and suggestions which your subordinate might have to offer? . . Have you provided opportunities for training and experience which will help aid in performing job functions more effectively? . . . Do you give recognition for superior performance? . . . Do you help to give each person a sense of personal worth?

You may not be able to change the individuals' ability levels, but you can do much toward helping them utilize their abilities more fully.

JOB ENVIRONMENT

This includes such factors as the demands and pressure of the job, physical working conditions, other people, the job situation, markets, the opportunities, salary and incentive payments, and—perhaps most significant—the quality of your supervision.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The individual's effectiveness is determined partly by the situation in which he works. As a supervisor you play a very important role in determining and influencing the nature of the job situation. You create the "climate," and you partly determine the specific conditions of work.

Here are some examples of how you can affect an individual's work behavior . . .

The assignments you give may be stimulating and challenging to the individual's abilities . . . or, they may limit the full use of his abilities.

Your scheduling of assignments may overtax the individual . . . or, undertax abilities. Too much to do can lead to frustrations . . . while too little can lead to apathy.

You can provide tasks that lead to rewarding experiences . . . or you can provide tasks that are essentially non-stimulating and non-satisfying to the individual.

You can explain the significance of an assignment to help the individual understand its meaning . . . or you can fail to make the individual aware of the importance of the work.

You can overdirect people and make them feel that you do not trust their abilities to solve problems . . . or, you can underdirect and thereby fail to provide sufficient clarity regarding the nature of the job.

You can indicate that you "know all the answers" (and that they know none), and thereby fail to stimulate any independent thinking.

You can help the individual to remove the obstacles to effective job performance and personal satisfaction . . . or you can become an additional obstacle to be overcome.

These are some of the ways in which you can influence the job situation. Recognize that the work situation can affect the individual's performance. What you say and do can have a considerable bearing on how the individual performs on the job and how that person feels about it.

MOTIVATION

This refers to "internal" drive, willingness to perform, and interest in work. It is tied in very closely with the other two categories. Motivation plays a very important role in determining the extent to which one utilizes abilities, and the manner in which the environment is perceived.

How the individual *feels* about the working environment is of greater consequence than the mere fact of its being what it is.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

In no area can you exert so great an influence as in that of motivation. If you can get your personnel to *want to improve* and to *make plans* for performance improvement, and then to put forth the necessary effort to achieve their goals, you may consider yourself a successful manager.

"PERSON-ORIENTED" VS. "JOB-ORIENTED" SUPERVISORS

Experimental evidence indicates that the "person-oriented" supervisor is a more effective manager than is the "job-oriented" supervisor. The "person-oriented" manager is no less concerned about the job-to-be-done. However, that supervisor feels that these objectives can best be attained by the development of the personnel who perform the tasks.

The "person-oriented" supervisor will first try to understand whys of individual performance. The next step is to help work out developmental plans to capitalize on strengths and overcome or compensate for deficiencies.

This supervisor recognizes that personal development must come primarily from the individual. There is also recognition that development can come only if the individual is given an opportunity and a favorable work climate. This supervisor's goal is to get optimum production from employees, and at the same time see that they get optimum satisfaction from their work. Being "person-oriented", he or she tends to emphasize the role of "internal motivation"—the importance of getting his employees to *want to do their jobs well.*

The "job-oriented" supervisor, on the other hand, is more likely to think of motivation as something "externally applied"—something you *do* to your subordinates to get them to perform their work effectively. Such a supervisor is inclined to drive rather than lead. The job-oriented supervisor will probably tell subordinates what to do and what not to do, reprimand them for failures, and exhort them to "do better", without attempting to understand the underlying reasons for their behavior. Such an approach tends to be mechanical rather than understanding and appreciative.

This approach puts the subordinate in the position of *"having to" rather than "wanting to"*. As a result the subordinate may become defensive and tend to rationalize his or her performance rather than sincerely trying to evaluate present job behavior and set meaningful performance-improvement goals.

To compensate for the absence of adequate "internal motivation" in the subordinate, this supervisor may find it necessary to provide additional "applications" of external motivation. The supervisor in turn may build up tensions and feelings of hostility because of the effort and personal conflicts involved in getting results; and the situation drifts farther and farther away from the "mutual understanding" which is so essential to the growth and development of both supervisor and subordinates.

"HAVING TO" VS. "WANTING TO"—

You as a supervisor can improve your ability to develop subordinates if you will remember and act on the principle that people are more likely to reach performance goals if they really "want to" than if they just "have to".

You need only think back to your childhood for vivid examples of the difference between "wanting to" and "having to".

> You *wanted* to play ball, and that was easy. You had no difficulty concentrating all of your energies on the one activity, and doing your very best.
>
> But if you *had* to practice the piano, the situation was different. You had difficulty keeping your mind on the task. You kept thinking about other things you could be doing, about how much longer you had to continue practicing, about how inconsiderate your parents were, and about everything but your music.
>
> It took all of your energies just to keep going, and occasionally your parents had to resort to "externally applied" motiviation to prevent you from bogging down completely.

The ordinary work situation does not normally offer such extremes of "having to" and "wanting to", but still there is some similarity.

Part of the "wanting to" attitude is linked with the individual's personal ambitions and drives; and part is determined by the job situation. All individuals' behavior can be considered as goal directed. We generally think of the ambitious person as one who has goals, and the unambitious individual as one without goals. In reality, however, the unambitious individual has a goal. It is avoiding the expenditure of energy and effort in work. The ambitious person gets involved in the work, while the unambitious person does not desire such involvement.

The kinds of work involvement and goals sought by individuals can be affected by the supervisor's attitude toward the individual. Treating an employee with respect, recognizing the integrity of the individual, trying to understand each person, trying to help each individual grow and develop, helping each person overcome inadequacies and helping every employee define his or her job goals—all of these ways will increase the work-involvement of the individual and stimulate goal-directed activity toward better work performance.

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

Because methods are so important, we offer a few "guideposts" to help keep you on the right trail and make your counseling interviews more effective. These guideposts are classified into *"Before," "During,"* and *"After."*

Before the interview give adequate thought to the individual and the job.

During the interview conduct yourself so that the individual will be stimulated to want to improve and develop new performance goals.

After the interview make an evaluation of the individual's reaction, the goals that were set, and of your own functioning as a manager. The *Counseling Interview Summary* will aid in accomplishing this.

The following questions and suggestions are intended to be used as guideposts for your counseling session:

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

(1) THINK . . . *about the job*

What are the employee's accountabilities?

What end results are expected from the job? What constitutes a job well done?

What are the various factors which contribute to these end results? (Job knowledge, attitude, etc.)

Where does the job lead? Does it provide training for greater opportunities and increased responsiblities?

(2) THINK . . . *about the individual*

(a) Performance

In what areas has this person done particularly well? For what specific behavior does he or she deserve special commendation?

What areas to you feel need development most? What specific examples can you cite to indicate where he or she has not performed up to expectations?

Review your ratings and give some thought to the reasons why you rated this employee as you did on the different factors. Be sure to take into consideration *all significant areas* of accountability, as well as general over-all performance.

Then consider the underlying reasons for behavior:

Why is this person doing or not doing a good job? . . . What factors may account for this behavior? Is it skills, attitudes, situations?

Is the work sufficiently challenging this particular employee? . . . Does it provide opportunity to perform? . . . Is it too difficult for this person?

Does he or she have an adequate knowledge of the job and of the field? . . .
Does he or she appear to have the necessary abilities?

Then consider performance and development goals and plans:

In what ways would you like this employee to improve? . . . What new performance goals would you like adopted? . . . What personal improvement plans would you like this employee to set? . . . How can you help this person to achieve these goals?

(b) Potential

Even though you may not want to discuss potential directly with the person, it can have a bearing on the interview.

Is he or she the type of person who is likely to move out of the present work area into a management position? Or is it more likely that progress along non-managerial lines will be made?

Is there room to grow in the present job? Will the job grow with the employee? What are the opportunities open to this employee?

(c) Possible Reactions

How do you think he or she feels about the job? About you? . . . About a future with the company?

How might he or she react in the interview? . . . Will this person feel free to talk? . . . Is he or she likely to show tension and anxiety? . . . Is he or she likely to be defensive or antagonistic? . . . Can an objective self image be expected?

How does he or she feel about changing behavior or doing things in a different way? . . . Will criticism be taken as a threat to security? . . . Is he or she likely to *act* cooperatively, and agree just for the sake of being agreeable? . . Or will he or she be able to analyze problems, and discuss them sincerely and honestly?

What type of approach will get the most cooperation from the individual? . . . How can you best get this person to *want* to improve?

Is he or she overly satisfied with achievements, or is there an inclination to depreciate them? . . . Is "jacking up" needed? Is there a need for this employee to be more realistic?

Learning to anticipate possible reactions will help you counsel more effectively with different types of individuals.

(3) THINK . . . *about yourself*

It is important that you be aware of some of your own feelings and realize how they might affect both your appraisal of the employee and his or her reaction to you.

(a) *How do you feel about the counseling interview?* Are you just "getting it over with" because you feel it must be done or because "the house" wants it that way? Or do you really feel that it is worthwhile?

If you are convinced of the value of the interview, you will be better able to convey its worth to the individual, and thus will stand a better chance of eliciting cooperation.

(b) *How do you feel about the individual to be counseled?* Do you have a "me-against-him" feeling? Are you annoyed by some of his or her personality characteristics? Will you tend to judge in a rather critically negative fashion?

Do you feel very friendly toward the person? Might you be inclined to be too "easy"? Is the general level of performance such that you might be reluctant to criticize minor shortcomings?

In counseling an older employee, are you tempted to pass over certain phases of job performance because airing them may be uncomfortable or embarrassing to one or both of you? Do you have the feeling that an older person does not want to change, or cannot change?

(c) *How can you get the employee to participate freely in the discussion and make meaningful plans?* Here we might point out that people often tend to behave the way you expect them to. Therefore, if you expect resistance, you are likely to get it. On the other hand, if you expect cooperation, your expectations can be a positive force in the interview.

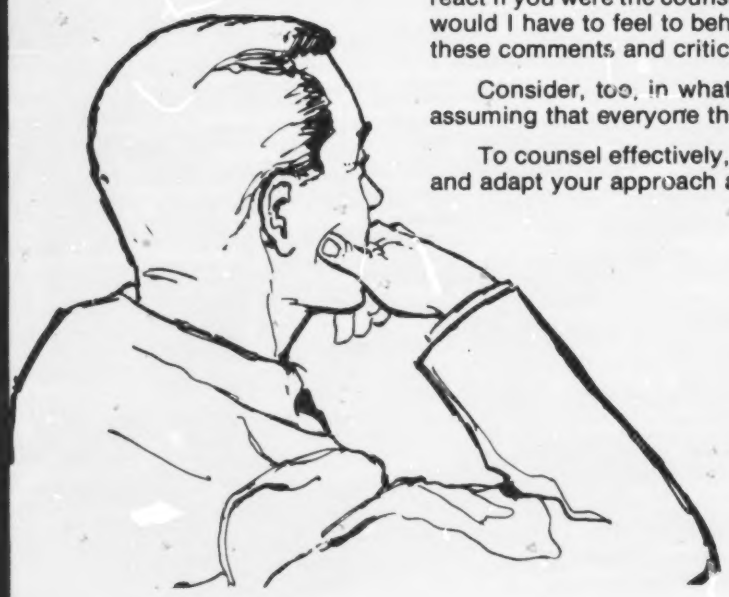
In preparing for the interview, think about how you have approached the individual in the past. What approach seemed most successful? How else might you approach this person?

Then think of what aspects of your own personality or actions might influence the behavior of others, particularly the person you are going to counsel.

Try to put yourself in the individual's shoes and think about how you might react if you were the counselee rather than the counselor. Ask yourself, "How would I have to feel to behave in such a manner?" . . . "How would I react to these comments and criticisms if I were at the receiving end?"

Consider, too, in what ways the individual is different from you. Avoid assuming that everyone thinks and feels as you do in a given situation.

To counsel effectively, you must be sensitive to the individual's reactions and adapt your approach accordingly.



(d) *Are you prepared for your part in the interview?* Are you in a friendly and cooperative frame of mind? . . . Will you be sympathetic and understanding, as well as objective and analytical? . . . Are you prepared to listen to his or her arguments and explanations?

Are you prepared to change your opinion if the discussion indicates that you might have been mistaken? Would you be willing to admit that you were mistaken, or to assume some of the responsibility for failures?

Do you have the feeling that the interview can be helpful to you as well as to the individual you are interviewing?

Do you expect to learn something from the interview?

(4) THINK . . . *about the purpose of the interview*

What do you expect to accomplish in the interview?

Do you see this primarily as an opportunity to express "what's wrong"? Do you feel that if the person is to improve he or she must be disciplined for past failures and told what to do to correct faults?

Or are you so hesitant to give adverse criticism that you might be more inclined to conduct the interview on a superficial "back-patting" level, and not even discuss some important problems?

It may help you to avoid these extremes if you remember that the main purpose of the counseling interview is to help the individual improve. And your effectiveness in conducting the interview—and your effectiveness as a manager, if you will—will be reflected in your ability to maximize the likelihood of this improvement.

It is to your interest, then, to realize that the best way to improve employee performance is to get the individual to *want to improve.* And the best way to instill this "internal" motivation is to listen to what he or she has to say, and to show interest and understanding in helping to analyze problems, and make plans for the future.

Think about how you want the individual to *feel* after the interview.

Think about how you want this person to *act* after the interview.

And then remember that the interview can best be judged by the results!

(5) GIVE THE INDIVIDUAL A CHANCE TO THINK, TOO . . .

Make an appointment in advance with the counselee. Arrange a time that is convenient for both of you, when neither of you is under pressure or strain, and when you will be able to give your full time and attention to the session.

When you make the appointment, ask the individual to do some thinking about the matter also, so that he or she won't come to the interview "cold." Ask this employee to examine personal ideas about job duties, and on how well he or she is performing on the job. Suggest that he or she consider any special problems or recommendations for discussion. And ask him or her to think of plans for improving job performance.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Be sure the interview is held in private and without interruptions.

Define the purpose of this meeting at the outset of the discussion.

Tell the counselee it will be a joint problem-solving experience, in which you will discuss together the individual's job, performance on the job, and plans for bringing about improvement and development.

Remember the purpose of the interview and don't let yourself get too far afield. Casual conversation can be of value in building rapport, but too much idle talk uses up valuable interview time and may make the individual feel that you are evading the main issues.

Remember, this session is *very important* to your employee. Every one of your employees is very interested in knowing how you feel about his or her performance and, more importantly, how you feel about *him or her.* Expect the employee to be very sensitive to the clues that indicate your personal attitude, consider that this person *may* misinterpret some of these clues. Thus, it is important for you to try to recognize what messages you may be communicating to your subordinate.

The general tone of the discussion should be one of friendliness and helpfulness. Convey the impression that you have time for the session, and that you consider it important. Make it a constructive discussion.

Give the individual an opportunity to analyze personal performance. Discuss problems, and then help formulate plans for the future. Emphasis should be on:

performance rather than personality (on what has *been done* rather than on what he or she *is)*

analysis rather than appraisal (on the *why* rather than the *what* of behavior)

insight rather than indictment (on understanding and helping rather than blaming)

development rather than discipline (on the future rather than the past).

Let the individual know that you are sincerely interested in what he or she has to say. . . . that you believe in him or her . . . and that you are truly concerned with existing problems and with helping plan a program to improve performance.

You can best convey your interest by attention and "non-evaluative" listening. This means that you will "hear the person out," and that you will refrain from making objections or from passing judgment on what is said.

During the course of the interview, concentrate on learning more about—

—what kind of person this is

—how he or she feels about the job

—his or her particular worries and hopes, and in general,

—"what makes him tick."

Learning more about each individual you counsel will help you to gain a better understanding of your own particular work organization and how you function as a manager. It will also help you realize better how your behavior affects the performance of your people.

And remember that you will learn more during the interview if you let the individual do most of the talking!

Remember the purpose of the interview:

Your primary aim in the interview is to help the individual become more effective in job performance. To do this, you will first try to gain a better understanding of the individual as an individual and of the different factors that influence this person's behavior. Then you will consider the following questions:

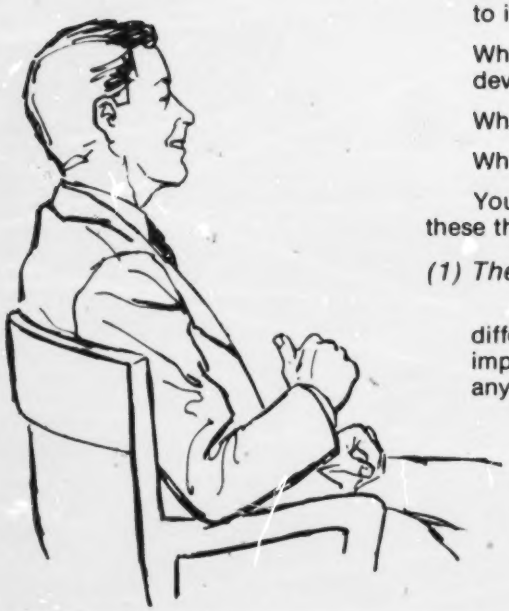
In what ways and in what areas of the job does this person most need to improve?

What can he or she do to improve performance and further personal development?

What goals for development will this individual set personally?

What can you do to help achieve these goals?

You will develop possible answers in a more detailed discussion of these three general areas:



(1) The person's job

Give the individual an opportunity to analyze the job. Ask that the different aspects of the job be considered; and comment on the importance of each. You may wish to question further if you feel that anything of significance has been omitted.

Does this employee have an understanding of personal areas of accountability? . . . Does this person know what is expected? . . . Does this employee know how to accomplish each job objective?

It is essential to cover *all* areas of work performance. If something is omitted, an employee might feel you do not consider it important.

(2) The person's job performance

(a) What are *his (her)* ideas?

After your preliminary discussion of the job itself, you may ask the individual to assess personal strengths and weaknesses with regard to the different job factors.

Ask the employee which parts of the job are easiest and most enjoyable . . . which personal qualities he or she feels are being used to best advantage . . . and which ones he or she feels are most in need of development and improvement.

(b) What are *your* ideas?

After the individual has had an opportunity to volunteer personal opinions, you will offer your own ideas on his or her performance.

Consider first those factors that have been discussed. Encourage the counselee to examine them further, if you think it advisable.

Do you agree with his (her) evaluation? . . .

Is this person objective with a fairly good understanding of personal job performance? . . .

Can you help by bringing up the "why's" as well as the "what's" of these particular performance factors?

After your discussion of what the individual considers to be personal strengths and weaknesses, you may suggest additional strong and weak points if you feel any significant areas have been omitted.

But first ask yourself: "Does this have an important bearing on job performance?" *If it is not related to performance, then it has no place in this interview.*

It is important to recognize also which behaviors are subject to improvement and which are due to the individual's natural limitations.

Direct attention to these other areas of strengths and weaknesses by asking questions such as these:

"How do you think you are doing in . . .?"

"Do you feel that you are doing as well as you might in . . .?"

"Don't you feel that you are to be commended for your work in . . .?" or

"How about . . .?"

(3) The "reasons why"—the analysis of performance

Throughout this discussion your emphasis should be on exploring the reasons why the person performs as he (she) does. You will aim for greater insight into job behavior in order to make meaningful plans for job improvement.

The better you and the counselee can understand the reasons—the "whys" of performance—the more effectively can plans be developed for performance improvement.

Think of some of the factors that may have influenced job performance in the past. It may be helpful for you here to consider these factors from two different standpoints—personal and situational.

With respect to personal factors—those influences *within* the individual—consider the following:

—job knowledge and information

—the extent to which personal abilities are utilized

—work habits

—ability to plan and schedule work so as to utilize time effectively

—ability to get along with others.

—drive and motivation

—the performance standards which this person sets for himself (herself).

With respect to factors in the individual's job situation, consider these factors:

—working conditions—equipment, space, etc.

—budget limitations

—the demands and pressures of the job

—other people—subordinates, co-workers, and you—the supervisor

—market conditions

—opportunities—for personal contacts, for self-expression, for the utilization of abilities, for increased responsibilities.

PLANNING

(1) Plans for the future

After discussing the individual's job and the "what's" and "why's" of job performance, the next step is to *formulate goals and plans for the future.*

Remember that almost any person will be more likely to follow through effectively on goals set personally than on goals that you set. This is most important—encourage each person to set *his own goals* and *targets.*

Let the individual know that your role is to help him (her) relate his (her) plans to his (her) own developmental needs and to company objectives, and that he (she) is in reality responsible ultimately for his (her) own development.

Here are some suggestions for helping the individual in planning personal development:

(1) *Encourage the employee to set specific objectives.* If this person tends to express improvement plans in vague or generalized terms, ask: "How will you know if or when you have achieved these goals? What signposts can you set up to check on your progress?"

(2) *Encourage the counselee to be realistic.* Because goals achieved often provide the encouragement needed for further effort, it is wise at the start not to set too many or too difficult objectives. Also, goals should be in line with the individual's capabilities. Attempting to change or improve everything at once may lead to frustration and discouragement, and may defeat the purpose of the directed development program.

(3) *Encourage the person to relate plans to job requirements or to personal development needs.* Consider the effects that a particular course of action will have on the individual's job performance. Will it help to overcome or compensate for present deficiencies? Will it serve to maintain and further develop present strengths? Will it make the person better qualified to assume greater responsibilities in the future?

Plans that do not serve these ends do not rightfully belong in this developmental program.

(4) *Encourage target dates.* Ask the counselee to specify *when* he (she) intends to initiate a particular program, and *by what date* he (she) expects results. this will provide a needed incentive to action, and will give you an opportunity to check progress later with the employee.

In helping the individual to formulate plans for the future, consider the general level of present job performance. If present accountabilities are not being carried out effectively, the primary emphasis should necessarily be on improvement of present performance. On the other hand, if the individual is highly effective on the present job, greater emphasis should be placed on personal development and on preparing for greater responsibilities in the future, by setting more challenging goals for the present.

It is also helpful, in planning, to consider both the *need* for change and the *difficulty* or *possibility* of change. You will ask:

> Which factors are at present the greatest hindrance to effective job performance? and
>
> > Which factors can be most easily changed—which ones can provide a "good start" toward performance improvement?

Your planning strategy depends upon these need and possibility considerations. The chart below suggests some planning recommendations for dealing with these interrelated factors.

PLANNING STRATEGY		
Areas of Performance ➤ ▼	**Difficult to change**	**Easy to change**
Greater need to change:	A. Put these on the long-range improvement schedule, *or* help the employee to compensate for, or work around, them.	B. *Work on these first!*
Lesser need to change:	C. Don't worry about these now!	D. Work on these, and it may help prepare for more difficult changes.

SOME PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Here are some examples of specific goals the individual might set personally. Resolve to . . .

. . . improve sales 10% by greater effort and planning.

. . . improve manufacturing efficiencies 5% by improved scheduling and fewer shutdowns.

. . . widen range of knowledge and improve job information through a planned reading program.

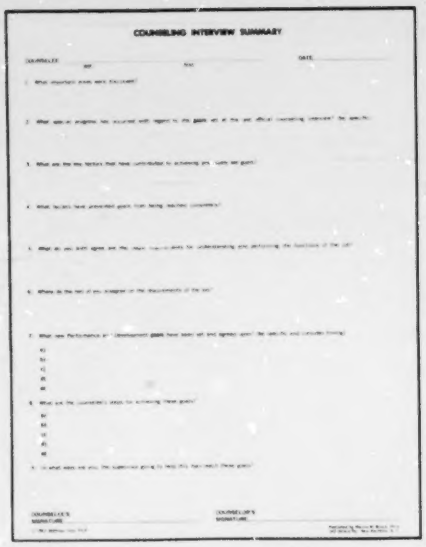
. . . develop greater self-confidence and improve group presentations by pursuing a public speaking course.

. . . improve personal organization and planning by having a more carefully thought out "things-to-do" list and by setting a definite time for completion of specific projects.

. . . improve departmental communications by holding weekly staff meetings.

. . . get all reports in on time.

Remember—in formulating these plans, encourage the individual to set *personal* targets and goals—indicate how you will help to achieve these goals.



COUNSELING INTERVIEW SUMMARY

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

At the end of your discussion you and the individual will fill in together the *Counseling Interview Summary* The purpose of this *Summary* is to have a record of the targets set, to refer to in the future, as well as to insure a joint commitment to goals and actions. You will designate what important areas were discussed, what performance and development goals were set, how these goals are to be achieved, how the person plans to reach these goals and in what ways you intend to assist. Since you and the employee will work together on this summary, the final report will represent your combined thinking.

When the summary has been satisfactorily completed, both of you should sign the form to indicate your agreement, and the counselee should be given the employee form for personal records and follow-through.

After the counseling session is over, turn your attention to your own part in the interview.

Ask yourself: Did the interview achieve its purpose? . . . Did you help the individual? . . . How could you have made it more productive?

If you had it to do over again, what changes would you make in your approach? . . . What things would you cover that were omitted this time? . . . What things would you omit that were discussed, perhaps unnecessarily?

Do you feel that you learned something new from the interview? About counseling techniques? About the individual? About yourself? About your organization?

Who did most of the talking? . . . Did you really listen to what the counselee had to say?

Were you satisfied with the interview? . . . Do you believe that you understand each other better as a result of the counseling session?

Do you feel that you will be able to conduct your next interview more effectively?

Do you have a better understanding of the problems involved in interviewing and how best to deal with them?

Do you appreciate the value of getting the individual to participate actively in the evaluation and set his (her) own goals?

The benefits which you and the individual derive from the counseling session will be, in a sense, a measure of your own ability as a manager.

TIPS ON CREATIVE COUNSELING

COMMUNICATING WITH INDIVIDUALS

If the counseling interview is to achieve its purpose you must "get your ideas across" to the individual and in turn be receptive to his (her) ideas.

Communication is essential. Hence you should learn to recognize and deal with some of the barriers to a free exchange of ideas. Emotional feelings and attitudes play an important role in communication. Some attitudes may have constructive consequences, while others may tend to interfere with the goals and purposes of performance review.

Your role is to encourage and stimulate the individual to participate constructively in the interview.

Remember that if the individual

. . . *volunteers ideas and opinions,* personal thinking will be clarified and you will have a better understanding of that employee;

. . . *discusses problems and expresses feelings freely,* he (she) will get these problems "off his chest," and be better able to perform the job effectively;

. . . *recognizes personal performance shortcomings,* this is a good start toward correcting or overcoming them;

. . . *discusses personal job performance objectively and accepts suggestions and direction,* he (she) will be better able to set appropriate and realistic improvement goals; and

. . . *sets specific improvement goals,* he (she) will be more likely to attain stated objectives.

Remember too that if the individual . . .

. . . *feels defensive,* he (she) won't be likely to analyze and discuss personal performance freely and realistically;

. . . *feels hostile or antagonistic,* he (she) won't be likely to listen to or accept suggestions;

. . . *feels overly confident,* personal shortcomings will not be recognized, making effective planning for performance improvement difficult;

. . . *hesitates to air personal "gripes" or discuss job problems,* the burden will continue and this employee won't be able to perform as effectively as desirable;

. . . *has a "you tell me" attitude,* he (she) won't be participating in plans for performance improvement and personal development; and

. . . *doesn't participate,* he (she) will be less likely to achieve objectives; and the counseling session will not serve its true purpose.

To make the counseling session successful, you will want to minimize the blocks to effective communication and create instead an atmosphere that will stimulate the individual to participate freely in the analysis and planning.

Your ability to do this will depend to a great extent upon your understanding of human behavior. So let's take a look at some different kinds of people, trying to understand why they behave as they do, and what you might do to help them respond more constructively in the interview.

Meet the "Cast of Characters." You know some of them—now try to understand them a little better!

CONTRARY CONSTANCE

This woman does not agree with your evaluation or constructive criticism, and cites evidence to show that your analysis is not accurate. She may even raise objections to your suggestions for performance improvement. Her objections, however, *seem* objective and unemotional and appear to be based on her actual beliefs rather than on any need to defend herself or to "fight back."

This woman may simply lack insight into her own behavior and capabilities, or she may have sound reasons for her stand.

1. The first rule in dealing with this individual is to *let her disagree.* Listen to what she has to say. If you react emotionally, or "cut her off" you will be doing both of you an injustice.

2. You can learn from her objections. You may be stimulated to look for more evidence and thus sharpen your evaluation. If the person is right, don't be afraid to change your evaluations.

3. Even if the woman's objections have no merit in themselves, listening to them will help you understand her better. And giving her an opportunity to voice her disagreement will serve to "clear the air." As a result, she is likely to gain greater insight into her own behavior and become more receptive to your point of view.

4. Remember, also, that it is not always possible to get agreement at first. Deep-seated disagreements may result from differences in personality makeup, background, situation, and the like. They can best be resolved by a better understanding of the individual and the situation.

AGREEABLE ARCHIE

This is the typical "yes" man. He agrees at least on the surface, with all of your ideas and suggestions, almost too readily. He responds to your criticisms with "Yes, I'm sure you're right," and is only too willing to accept your suggested improvement plans.

1. If the man carries through on all suggestions—and if you *are* right in all of your recommendations—then you have no problem.

2. But there is a possibility that he may be reserving his objections, that he is not thinking or not listening. Or perhaps he is responding in this manner just to please you, because he thinks agreement is the best way to "get on the good side of the boss."

3. Just in case his agreement is not sincere, you might pose your questions in such a way that he is forced to commit himself. Also, it would be helpful to let him discuss his performance and his plans before you express your ideas.

NERVOUS NED

This man is nervous and ill at ease. It may be his first counseling interview, and he may be apprehensive because he doesn't know what to expect. He may even be afraid of you!

He may be reluctant to "open up" and talk. He may appear to have difficulty expressing himself—may hesitate, stammer, or appear to be unduly conscious of his choice of words. Or, on the other hand, he may talk more than usual, apparently without thinking much about what he is saying.

1. Think about whether you prepared him adequately for the session. Perhaps your invitation to "come into my office" was somewhat abrupt and "frightening."

2. Try to put him at ease at the start of the interview by talking about what he knows best and feels most free about. (But don't overdo the "comradeship" idea or he may become even more apprehensive!)

3. Explain to him the purpose of the counseling interview, with special emphasis on the idea of *helping him.*

4. Compliment him on work he has done well, and encourage him to discuss his improvement needs, his problems, and plans for the future.

DEFENSIVE DIANA

This is the woman who is always "on guard," with excuses and explanations for her behavior. She apparently feels "threatened" and tends to concentrate her efforts on "protecting" herself during the interview.

Her defensiveness may be reflected in a tendency to misinterpret what you say. She may respond to a simple "Yes-No" question by a long-winded discussion of why some operation was or was not completed.

She may defend herself by shifting the blame to others—to her subordinates, her associates, to you, or to company policy. She may argue or object emotionally to your efforts to point out deficiencies in her performance. Or he may assume a "picked on" role instead, and take refuge in lamenting her own inadequacies.

Why does she feel threatened? Is she worried about her job performance, or your attitudes toward her? Is she afraid to face unpleasant facts about herself? Or do you elicit this behavior by an implied criticism in the way you phrase your questions or comments?

1. Give her reassurance. She needs and wants to know that you regard her favorably and that you are not out to "scalp" her.

2. Emphasize the responsibility that you have to help her develop and perform effectively on the job.

3. Demonstrate your interest in helping her by volunteering what *you* plan to *do* to help her develop.

4. Point out the concern is not with her but rather with her *performance.*

5. Listen. This is one of the best ways for you to deal with her defensiveness. If you encourage the individual to talk, and if you show interest and an accepting attitude toward what she has to say, she will feel less "threatened" and consequently will be able to discuss her situation more objectively.

HOT-HEADED HANNAH

This woman is "looking for a fight." She gets angry and emotional, and may respond to suggestions or criticism by blaming you, her subordinates, her co-workers, or "the Company" for her failure. She will probably tell you everything that's wrong with everything, and dare you to object!

1. Try to understand the cause of this person's behavior. Consider the problems she has been confronted with recently. Has she been frustrated in attempts to achieve important goals? Has she had problems in his dealings with other people? Might she have personal problems which tend to produce feelings of hostility?

2. Listen to her complaints. Let her "blow off steam." Don't show disapproval. Avoid being drawn into an argument which may arouse emotions further or seriously delay understanding.

3. Ask her to try to consider the situation from other people's points of view.

4. Find some area of agreement—show her that at least in some areas you and she can agree. Maybe then you'll help her try to find some agreement with your views.

5. If you feel that the situation is too emotionally charged for any meaningful planning, suggest that you continue your discussion at a later date when her problems can be discussed more objectively. Be sure to let her know that her loss of temper or emotional behavior is not a permanent black mark against her.

SILENT SAM

This man "won't talk." He may simply be passive and unresponsive or he may be surly, uncooperative, or resentful. He will respond to criticisms or suggestions with a nod or a grunt, will not volunteer either constructive suggestions or "gripes", and will exert no real effort to participate in his evaluation and planning.

1. Try to find out why he acts this way. Is it normal behavior for him? Does he lack confidence? Is he afraid to reveal his own attitude? Or is he "just clamming up" for the interview.

2. Think about how you have reacted to his criticisms and complaints in the past. Has your behavior given him reason to feel that you resent any "griping" on his part—that you are likely to chalk it up on his record as evidence of disloyalty, uncooperativeness, or the like? Or has your response been such that he simply feels that offering suggestions and discussing his problems with you is of "no use"?

3. In attempting to "loosen up" this individual, discuss the purpose of the counseling interview. Point out that it is intended to help *him*, and that he plays the major role in his own development program.

4. Reassure him early in the interview. Talk about the aspects of his job that he has performed particularly well. Ask his opinions about things that are important to him. And then *listen*. He will be more likely to express himself if he feels you are interested in what he has to say, and if he knows that you value his ideas and opinions.

5. For a little while, be silent yourself—and he'll have to talk!

OVERCONFIDENT OPHELIA

This person thinks she's tops. She feels she is really performing at a high level of effectiveness, and is "going places" in the Company. And maybe she is!

1. Encourage her to set difficult goals, and give her an opportunity to prove that she is worthy of her own confidence.

2. Be sure that her high opinion of herself does not blind her to possible improvement needs. Encourage her to look at her behavior objectively and to "back up" her evaluations with specific examples of performance. Impress her with the idea that nobody is so good that there isn't *some* room for improvement.

3. Ask her how her attitude may affect others' willingness to work for and with her.

4. Spell out longer range development goals, if she really *is* that good.

NORMAL NORBERT

This man is friendly, intelligent, cooperative and highly motivated. he is able to look at himself quite objectively, and welcomes suggestions for improvement and development. He volunteers his ideas and discusses his problems freely. He is not afraid to raise objections if he disagrees with you, and at the same time, he does not react emotionally when you disagree with his ideas and suggestions. His focus is on the job to be done. He does not interpret criticism as a personal affront, and hence reacts neither aggressively nor defensively in the counseling situation.

This man is eager for promotion and advancement, but does not feel thwarted if situational factors prevent him from advancing as rapidly as his efforts and his capabilities warrant. He is pleased and enthusiastic when commended for good work, but is not dependent on this recognition for his motivation.

He is aware of the role that you as his superior must play in the interview, and he also recognizes his own responsibility in understanding his improvement needs and in formulating plans for the future.

If you encounter this man in your counseling experiences — you're a very fortunate supervisor!

Obviously, Normal Norbert does not exist. But then, neither do any of the other "characters" which we have described.

The real persons whom you encounter in your counseling experiences will not be any of these specific character types. Instead, they will probably represent composites of these characters. One person may have a little of the Defensive Diana in her and resemble Agreeable Archie in other respects. Another individual may have in him a little of the nervous Ned, a few parts of Hot-headed Hannah, and just a dash of Normal Norbert.

We have presented these characters as distinct types simply to help you recognize some common reactions. It is up to you to try to determine which characters are being reflected in the individual's behavior, and to deal with them accordingly.

And more important, you should try to understand the *real person* with whom you are discussing performance improvement and development plans.

READING MATERIALS

Here are some references to some books and articles that can further enrich your understanding of the counseling process.

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6. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL IN PERSPECTIVE: A SURVEY OF CURRENT PRACTICE. D. Gill, B. Ungerson, M. Thakur. London: Institute of Personnel Management, 1974.
7. THE JOB REVOLUTION—Judson Goodling. New York: Walker & Co., 1972.
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14. WORKING—L. Terkel. New York: Pantheon, 1974.
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